

Food rescue project serves up a lifeline for the needy

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LING JAYA: More hotels in the city centre are participating in rescue programmes by donating surplus food not served at the line to feed the needy.

The Aid Foundation operations manager Hayati Ismail said cooked food rescued from hotels was disposed or re-engineered into menu items before being sent to Pusat Transiti Gelendangan on Wednesdays and selected welfare workers are trained to handle such foods. She said four hotels in the city had joined the food rescue programme this Ramadan.

Hopefully, the amount of food this year will be lower than last year, she added. The foundation is a food bank that salvages surplus food from producers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers for re-distribution to the needy.


In collaboration with MY Save network, it also collects unsold daily food from Ramadan bazaars in Ampang Baru, Kuala Lumpur, Precinct 3, Putrajaya, to channel to urban poor. Hayati said the foundation distributes to more than 140 homes and more requests from charities come in every week for food aid.

Malaysians are urged to do their part to curb food waste by donating surplus food to NGOs such as the Aid Foundation, Kechara Soup Kitchen and The Lost Food Project. Hayati said people should bring their own food containers and set a table for what you need, not what you want. For buffet diners, avoid ordering mountains of food on your plate, she said.


While preparing food at home, set up a weekly or a monthly routine in order to reduce wastage. Hayati said overestimating portions, said Hayati. "If you have frozen and thawed food when needed. Remember, every nine people does not

Reducing food waste

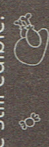
What we can do today



Malaysians generate about **38,000** tonnes of waste per day.



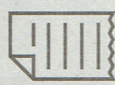

Around **15,000** tonnes of this is food waste.



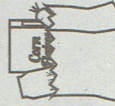
Out of this, **3,000** tonnes are still edible.

How to avoid food waste?

When shopping:

-  **Plan meals,** use grocery lists, and avoid impulse buys.
-  **Buy exactly what you need.** For example, if a recipe calls for two carrots, don't buy a whole bag.
- Set a budget.**
- Bring a container.** This will prevent you from buying more food than you can carry.

At home:

-  **Practice FIFO** (First In, First Out). When unpacking groceries, move older products to the front and put new products in the back.
- Take stock.** Note upcoming expiration dates on foods you already have at home, and plan meals around the products that are closest to their expiration.
- Designate one dinner each week as a **"use-it-up"** night. Instead of cooking a new meal, look around in the cupboards and fridge for leftovers and other food that might otherwise get overlooked.
- Use it all.** Use every piece of whatever food you're cooking with, whenever possible.
- Donate** what you won't use. Give edible, safe food to food banks or feed stray animals.

Source: Solid Waste Corporation Management (SWCorp) and www.greatist.com

packaged food items to get a better understanding of the shelf life.

"People misunderstand this (food package labelling) and a lot of food is thrown away because of this.

"For example, a Best Before date after it has passed the date. It means that according to regulations – and regulations are always strict – it might start losing its flavour after that date.

"So, it just might taste not as good after that date," she said, adding that Malaysians could also learn about food storage techniques, such as how to store fresh food better so that it lasts longer and reduce the need to buy more food in a short span of time.

Mooney said the Lost Food Project deals mainly with "rescuing" uncooked food from supermarkets and supermarkets such as Cold Storage, Village Grocer and Mercato, and manufacturers and wholesale markets.

The Lost Food Project also works with Kuala Lumpur City Hall to continue creating awareness on wasting less food, she said.

The food saved is then donated to different charities around town, which benefits those who might not be able to get protein-filled food or fresh fruits and vegetables.

"The people we are giving the foodstuff to have a terribly basic diet. This is why the project is lovely – we are giving them healthy and nutritious food," she added.

Mooney has high hopes for the ability of Malaysians to curb food wastage and help the underprivileged at the same time.

"Malaysia has three key ingredients we need for the project to succeed: love of food, love of mankind and generosity of heart," she said.

Those interested in helping can go to www.foodaidfoundation.org as well as www.facebook.com/thelostfoodproject for more details.

During mealtime:

- Start with **less food** on your plate.
- **Split the dish** when eating out if the portion is too much for you.
- Take **leftovers** home.

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"They are more appreciative of food than our generation," said Mooney, a Briton who moved to Malaysia almost four years ago.

She added that society needed to change how it looked at food, especially when shopping in supermarkets.

Mooney said one of the ways Malaysians could alleviate wastage was by being less fussy about the presentation of fresh fruits and vegetables.

"It's crazy because if there is a bruise (on a fruit), just cut it off and eat the fruit. Often, a bruised fruit will not make you ill," she said.

Malaysians, she added, could also educate themselves on labels on

household throws away food worth RM2,700 a year.

"This year, we would like to focus more on creating awareness among consumers on avoiding food waste. We should learn to love food and hate waste," said Hayati.

Meanwhile, The Lost Food Project founder Suzanne Mooney said modern society as a whole had a different relationship with food compared to previous generations, leading to more wastage.

"We are too fussy about (the state of) food. My parents grew up at the end of World War II in Europe and they have a different concept of food than I do, as they grew up with rationations.

have access to food daily," she said. The Solid Waste Management and Public Cleansing Corporation (SWCorp) said Malaysians contributed 15,000 tonnes of food waste to the landfills.

Of this amount, 8,000 tonnes were avoidable food waste and 3,000 tonnes were still edible before being thrown away.

"This is enough to feed two million hungry people. And during festive seasons, the waste can go up to 50% more," said SWCorp.

Hayati said the lack of awareness among consumers contributed to the high food waste. "Another study by SWCorp shows that an average family of five in a

Watch the video
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